United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1676
29 June 1994

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General in report to Security Council recommends UNMIH mandate be extended for one month; says in view of deteriorating situation in Haiti, consideration should be given to strengthening Mission.

+ As situation in Aden worsens, endangering lives of thousands, Secretary-General reiterates call for cease-fire; reminds Yemen's leaders of their reponsibility to their people and international community.

+ Secretary-General chairs inter-agency meeting on Assistance to Occupied Territories; says United Nations must adopt integrated and coherent response to social and economic needs of Palestinians.

+ Economic and Social Council President calls for "hands-on approach" to development problems; says Council must address role of private sector, capacity of United Nations to influence macro-economic policy and whether there is need for new body on human and social development.

+ High Commissioner for Human Rights Jose Ayala Lasso calls for ratification and full implementation of Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) be extended for one month. In a report to the Security Council dated 28 June, the Secretary-General said the Council might consider modifying the Mission's original mandate in view of the deteriorating situation in the country. In that case, it would be necessary to estimate the additional resources required for UNMIH to accomplish its new tasks. The extension would enable the Friends of the Secretary-General on Haiti and the Council to consult with the relevant parties on the possible strengthening of the Mission and its role in international efforts to solve the Haitian crisis.

(more)

For information media--not an official record

The Secretary-General said the Friends stated at their June meeting in New York that they were in favour of reconfiguring and strengthening the Mission. Similarly, the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted a resolution supporting United Nations measures to strengthen UNMIH. They said it should assist in the restoration of Democracy in Haiti by professionalizing the Armed Forces and training a new police force. It could also help maintain civil order and protect personnel working with humanitarian and human rights organizations the country.

* * *

The situation in Aden has steadily worsened in recent days, endangering the lives of thousands of people, including 3,000 Somali refugees who are stranded in the city, according to a United Nations spokesman. Electricity has been cut off almost everywhere, interfering with water pumps and causing severe water shortages. Hospitals were no longer able to cope with the increasing numbers of war casualties.

In response to the intolerable situation, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has reiterated his urgent call for an immediate cease-fire in Yemen to allow emergency aid deliveries and safe passage to the city. He reminded the country's leaders of their responsibility to their people and the international community.

Meanwhile, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has asked for a forty-eight hour cease-fire to be observed in Aden beginning 10:00 a.m. local time, 30 June, so it can deliver relief supplies. A ship chartered by the ICRC has left the port of Djibouti and is scheduled to arrive in Aden at midday tomorrow, bringing equipment needed for the distribution of drinking water. The ICRC has also decided to cross the front lines between Sana'a and Aden to bring in extra relief supplies.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today chaired the inter-agency meeting on United Nations Assistance to the Occupied Territories. The Secretary-General said the crucial and most immediate test of the United Nations system will be its ability to respond, in an integrated and coherent way, to the situation in the Gaza Strip where Palestinian needs are greatest. Every effort must be made to assist the Palestinian authority in establishing its new administration and the institutions necessary to sustain it throughout the transitional period.

The Secretary-General said an important purpose of the inter-agency meeting was to agree on the principle of system-wide coordination in the delivery of United Nations assistance in the occupied territories. This must take into account the principle role played by the World Bank, which more than any other international organization, had worked together with the Palestinians in their development plan, he said. It was also essential that

(more)

the Organization's output be perceived as professional, harmonious and flexible, given that the occupied territories -- for historical, religious and strategic reasons -- remained constantly in the public eye.

* * *

The President of the Economic and Social Council, Richard Butler (Australia), declared today that it was time for a "hands-on approach" to the problems facing development. He was opening an exchange of views on the Secretary-General's report "An Agenda for Development" at the Council's high-level segment. Ambassador Butler raised several issues which he said the Council must address. Among them were the role to be played by the private sector in development; the capacity of the United Nations policy-setting bodies to influence macro-economic policy; and whether there was a need for a new body, such as a council on human and social development.

The Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), Catherine Bertini, said her agency spent almost 70% of its resources on emergency relief and 25% on development in 1993, contrasting with 1989, when it spent 60% on development. Those figures demonstrated that the first component for development was peace, she said. Dr. Nafis Sadik, Executive-Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), stressed that the United Nations was uniquely qualified to facilitate international cooperation. She said the transparency and participation in decision-making required at the national level was also needed internationally.

* * *

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala Lasso, has launched an international appeal for an end to torture. He has also called for the ratification and full implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In a ceremony at the Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims in Copenhagen, he appealed for increased financial contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. He also called for help for treatment centres which provide assistance and remedies for the physical, psychological and social rehabilitation of torture victims.

Ambassador Ayala Lasso emphasized that ending torture was the beginning of true respect for the most basic of all rights -- the intrinsic dignity and value of each individual. He also said that freedom from torture was a right which must be protected under all circumstances, including in times of internal or international disturbances or armed conflicts.

* *** *